

## POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 1 NOVEMBER 2021

**Present:** Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Duveen, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, McEwan, Mitchell, Pearce, Rowland, Skeats, Stevens, Terry and White

**Apologies:** Councillor Robinson

### 42. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 43. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr McElroy	Living Hours Employer	Cllr McEwan

(The full text of the question and response was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

### 44. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TRANSIT SITE

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the progress towards delivering a site to meet the transit needs for Gypsies and Travellers within Reading and seeking approval to submit a planning application. A Gypsy and Traveller Site Appraisal was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report noted that a Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment had been carried out in 2017 which had identified needs of 10-17 permanent pitches and 10 transit pitches for Gypsies and Travellers up to 2036. There was currently no provision for this community within the borough. Following a review of sites in 2019/20 the Council had instructed Hampshire County Council (HCC) to undertake an appraisal of two potential sites within the borough to accommodate the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, which was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The appraisal had concluded that the site at Smallmead was potentially suitable as a transit site option to accommodate seven pitches or up to 14 caravans and cars. HCC had been instructed to carry out a detailed feasibility of the Smallmead site with the intention of enabling a planning application to be submitted.

The report explained that there were three main issues with the site: its location next to the recycling centre and water treatment works with odour and public health issues, its location on the edge of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for the Atomic Weapons

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Establishment (AWE) Burghfield, and the fact that it sat within a flood zone. Further complications had arisen due to the view of the Environment Agency (EA) that the Gypsy and Traveller community should be considered as a 'highly vulnerable' group when assessing flood risk, which effectively meant that no technical solution to flood risk mitigation could overcome this in-principle objection. Officers considered that a transit use would instead fall into the 'more vulnerable' classification under the National Planning Policy Framework which meant that sequential and exception tests were required, but did not necessarily mean that development was automatically inappropriate. HCC's flood consultants were in dialogue with the EA who were currently indicating that they would raise an in-principle objection if the Council were to seek planning approval for the site.

The report noted that the site was also located on the edge of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield. It sat outside of the 3.5km radius on which the DEPZ was based, but due to the methodology applied to the creation of the zones was still located within the defined DEPZ. Policy was being developed in liaison with West Berkshire Council for sites that were beyond the 3.5km radius but technically within the DEPZ and therefore a decision on whether this site could accommodate this use would need to be tested during the planning application.

The report proposed that, despite the significant issues with the land at Smallmead, a planning application be submitted as this was currently the only option available to deal with the needs of Gypsies and Travellers within Reading.

The report noted that the Council continued to deal with unauthorised encampments in the borough, the majority of which were on Council land. This had significant financial costs in terms of legal, bailiff, clean-up costs and officer time as well as a detrimental effect on communities when the encampments took place within public spaces. Powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to seize vehicles of those who had failed to comply with a direction to leave land relied upon a suitable pitch being available on a caravan site within a local authority area, which meant that the ability to use these powers in Reading was currently restricted by the lack of sites.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the current position on progressing the Gypsy and Traveller site, including matters relating to the Environment Agency and Atomic Weapons Establishment, be noted;**
- (2) That the submission of a planning application for the land at Smallmead be approved, whilst noting the risks set out in the report.**

### **45. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN LIMITED - RESERVED MATTERS**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report to the Committee, in its capacity as sole member of Brighter Futures for Children Ltd, seeking approval for the appointment of a new Independent Non-Executive Director for BFfC.

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The report noted that BFfC had conducted a skills assessment of the Board earlier in 2021 and concluded that the skills of the current Non-Executive Directors aligned with the Company requirements. To further enhance and provide additional breadth of skills a need for an additional Non-Executive Director with significant expertise and experience at a senior level in Education had also been identified. The recruitment had concluded with Calvin Pike the unanimous candidate of the panel. He had extensive, successful leadership experience in education and demonstrated strong commitment to addressing inequality in education and improving life chances for children and families in Reading.

**Resolved -**

**That Calvin Pike be appointed as a new Independent Non-Executive Director for BFfC.**

### **46. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved -**

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of items 47 & 48 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

### **47. ENERGY SUPPLY CONTRACTS**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to enter into a Fully Managed Service contract for energy supply and bill validation.

The report recommended moving to a Fully Managed Service offered by West Mercia Energy (WME), which would provide a bill validation service in addition to managing the procurement framework. Switching to the Fully Managed Service required Committee approval due to the change in contractual arrangements, although the energy supplier and the 'green' energy supplied would remain the same.

**Resolved -**

**That the Council enter into the recommended West Mercia Energy Fully Managed Service contract for energy supply and bill validation for the 5 year period 2022 to 2027, and give notice on the existing supply contracts with TotalEnergies from April 2022.**

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

### **48. PROCUREMENT OF WATER SERVICES**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to set up a new water supply and wastewater contract.

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The report noted that the Council had most recently procured water through a framework agreement managed by Crown Commercial Services (CCS), with call-off contracts with Wave as the supplier, and that a two-year water supply and wastewater services contracts had been put in place beginning from April 2020. A new procurement cycle provided the opportunity to consider the available options. The report sought approval to set up a new water supply and wastewater contract through the West Mercia Energy, Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services procurement framework following the end of the existing contract, from April 2022, for a minimum period of 2.5 years.

### **Resolved -**

**That the Council enter into a contract with Wave for the provision of water services under the West Mercia Energy Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services framework for the period April 2022 to October 2024.**

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.55 pm)